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SEPTEMBER 2019 | VOLUME 10 ISSUE 9

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VENDOR PROFILE: PONY BUSH, PAGE 8



GROUND COVER

NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP | WASHTENAW COUNTY, MICH.

CAN ANN ARBOR BUILD ENOUGH HOUSING TO BEAT THE CRISIS?

These fellows say yes.

Najeeb Hasan, who recently graduated with a master of architecture from U-M; real estate developer **Peter Allen**, who teaches at Ross School of Business; and **Doug Kelbaugh**, former dean of the Taubman School of Architecture, stand on the roof of the Liberty Square Parking Structure in downtown Ann Arbor, one of several publicly owned sites they say could accommodate housing near centers of employment.

PAGE 6

SPECIAL REPORT: Rethinking
the Ann Arbor housing crisis



LETTERS

Seven years of selling

Thank you, Groundcover. September will make seven years since I have been working for you when I was homeless in 2013. Now it paid off in so many ways. You are helping me going back to school; my best dream ever. Hard work, everything, it paid off with my health and everything. I did it. I know my girls will never know I am going back to school, but maybe God will help put us back as a family. I will never give up my heart for that.

Paula, Vendor No. 157

Covering the underserved

Wanted to write a quick e-mail to let you know that I appreciate the content focus on issues regarding those often less-served in our community. I just read the August edition and think your coverage of affordable housing in our city is a very important one. I look forward to the new format and further articles on the important issues that need to be addressed.

Gloria Mason

Groundcover gratitude

Looking at the beautiful Groundcover paper is like eating your favorite ice cream on a 100-degree day.

Denise S., Vendor No. 485

Detroit Voices we should hear: Horror film inspired by the Blair case

ASHKAN KAZEMI

Groundcover contributor

On Aug. 10, filmgoers could experience Cinteopia again. An encore screening of Detroit Voices, a short-film competition in Cinetopia dedicated to Michigan filmmakers, was held at Michigan Theater in downtown Ann Arbor. “Knock Knock,” a short film made by Kennikki Jones-Jones, won the Audience Award at Detroit Voices. I had a chance to sit down with her and talk about her experience making the short film.

Jones-Jones made this short as a project while she was in graduate school at Florida State University. “Knock Knock” is the story of an African-American woman who experiences a chilling revelation when her concern for the safety of the kids next door begins to haunt her. Jones-Jones told me that the film is based on the true story of Michelle Blair, a woman from Detroit who murdered her two children and kept them in her freezer for two years. It was a very sad story that inspired this film.

“This was the kind of thing that haunted my spirit for a long time and that’s why I made this into a horror film,” Jones-Jones said. “There’s a thin line between discipline and abuse and we don’t speak about it in the black community. Some parents are a little bit more extreme than others, but I think we all accept corporal punishment as an option, at least in my small black community ... Because as I grow and develop as a mother, my stance on abuse or discipline has changed. I wanted to voice these concerns; this was my Detroit Voice.”

“The inspiration for ‘Knock Knock’ was based off of Michelle Blair. ... She happened to live in Martin Luther King Apartments, which was down the street from Martin Luther King High School, [which] I went to. And she was a young mother and I was a young mother. So, I felt closely related to her when she was just so angry and full of rage. I understood her rage.”

Jones-Jones, who was a teen mother, thinks it’s possible to heal through horror. “Horror is just the horrific things that happen in life. For a long time, the Michelle Blair story haunted me. When I wanted to make ‘Knock Knock,’ I realized there’s the story of this woman and then there are so many other stories just like that. So, I



A scene from “Knock Knock,” winner of the Audience Award at Cinetopia’s Detroit Voices short-film competition this year.

thought if we can look at the horrific things on the screen, maybe we can view them outside of the theater and say: What can I do to change it?”

While she was wrapping up graduate school, Jones-Jones’s father died. “My father had a house in Detroit and I didn’t want to be a part of the degradation of Detroit, so abandoning it was not an option. We also did not want to sell the house because it meant a lot to my father. So, we decided to move back to Detroit in my father’s house and fix it up. And so, to then get into this film festival that is titled Detroit Voices really meant a lot to me.”

Jones-Jones made this film with a mostly student film crew at school. “I’m trying to figure out how this film-making process is in the real world. I just wrote a piece for a feature film and now I’m trying to figure out how to find a crew,” Jones-Jones said. “Festivals like Detroit Voices are our stage and [we] filmmakers get to meet the people who are also making films and discover what they’re doing to get a platform. I also think I can build a stage here where my voice is heard, and that helps my confidence grow.”

If you did not have a chance to see “Knock Knock” yet, it will also be featured in Detroit Shetown Film Festival, September 12-16 at Cinema Detroit. ●

GROUNDCOVER

Mission

Creating opportunity and a voice for low-income people while taking action to end homelessness and poverty.

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Michelle DeFrancesco — managing director

Jim McBee — managing editor

Andrew Nixon — editor

This month’s contributors

Elizabeth Baumann

Susan Beckett

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Cindy Gere

Ashkan Kazemi

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Will Shakespeare

Volunteers

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Katie Eldridge

Gerry Charbeneau

Glenn Gates

Robert Klingler

Jon MacDonagh-Dumler

Lucy Miller

Sandy Schmoker

Jan Taylor

Ryan Werner

Mary Wisgerhof

Story and photo submissions

submissions@groundcovernews.com

Advertising

contact@groundcovernews.com

Contact us

• contact@groundcovernews.com

• groundcovernews.org

• facebook.com/groundcover

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Washtenaw County Senior Café Program

The Senior Café program gives seniors the opportunity to receive nutritious meals and meet other seniors in the community if they choose to do so.

Meals are typically held in locations such as senior centers or churches throughout Washtenaw County. The frequency of these meals varies depending on the location.

For more information on the Senior Café program or the Meals on Wheel program, please visit: www.washtenaw.org/snp



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Saying goodbye to Toni Morrison, beloved author

*Lives of great people all remind us
That we can make our lives sublime
And in departing, we shall leave
behind us
Footprints on the sands of time.*

— From “Psalm of Life,” Henry
Wadsworth Longfellow

Our “Beloved” writer Toni Morrison departed this earth on Aug. 5. She was born on Feb. 18, 1931 in Loraine, Ohio. She attended Lorraine High School before moving to Howard University in Washington, D.C., for college. She did graduate work at Cornell University where she earned a master’s degree in English composition and literature. She taught courses at Howard University and Texas Southern University before accepting a job as an editor at Random House.

Some of us who loved her dearly and thank her for the purity of her craft as an artist visited movie theaters this summer to see the documentary, “Toni Morrison: The Pieces that I Am.” It showed Morrison as a funny, knowledgeable, fearless, humble and lovable literary giant. The New York Times recently said that Morrison inspired generations of writers, artists and thinkers. New York Times staff writer Lauren Christensen said, “Toni Morrison was the greatest chronicler of the American experience that we have ever known.”

Some of us have run out of complimentary adjectives to honor this precious American rose. Writer Walter Lippmann once remarked that a poet or writer is someone who uses her lonely courage to share her private feelings in public places. Toni Morrison has shared so many of her thoughts and feelings with her fellow Americans and the wider world. Love, memory and gratitude help to define our beloved writer. Her impact on culture, especially our understanding of racism in American history, is profound. For instance, in a posthumous nod to Morrison’s legacy, The New York Times recently published a bold challenge to the established American narrative, entitled “Project 1619,” recognizing this year as the 400-year anniversary of



Toni Morrison in 2013. Photo: West Point - The U.S. Military Academy



WILL SHAKESPEARE
Groundcover vendor No. 258

the beginning of American slavery, “understanding 1619 as our true founding, and placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of the story we tell ourselves about who we are.” Few individuals have contributed more to that collective understanding than Toni Morrison.

Tributes honoring Morrison are pouring in from around the world. They include the following:

“I was a student of Toni Morrison,

and more than any prizes or recognition, it has been the greatest honor of my life as a writer.” — author Mohsin Hamid

“With grace and wisdom, she respected, represented and rendered the beauty and complexity of the black experience.” — author and academic Henry Louis Gates

“She understood that we, as Americans, are seeds planted in soil tainted by the violence and injustice that tainted the founding of this nation.” — author Tayari Jones

“She has a comic serenity that sustained her in a long career as a novelist and as a public person. I prefer her earlier novels — ‘The Bluest Eyes,’ ‘Sula,’ and ‘Songs of Solomon.’” — literary critic Harold Bloom

“Tony Morrison was a giant of her times and ours. Her novel, ‘Beloved,’ is a heartbreaking testimony to the ongoing ravages of slavery, and should be read by all. That her strong voice will be missed in this age of renewed

targeting of minorities in the United States and elsewhere is a tragedy.” — author Margaret Atwood

“There are so many great things about Toni Morrison: her humor, her humanness, her helping hand to so many writers — also, of course, her genius.” — author Walter Mosley

“For weeks you will hear a lot about her life and importance in the wake of her death on Monday at 88. Remember this: Morrison was a Midwesterner, raised in Loraine, Ohio, between Cleveland and Toledo. ... Her fiction found its heart in small places.” — Christopher Borrelli, Chicago Tribune writer

“Word-work is sublime because it is generative; it makes meaning that secures our difference, our human difference—the way in which we are like no other life. We die. That may be the meaning of life. But we do language. That may be the measure of our lives.” — Toni Morrison, *The Atlantic* ●

The ups and downs of a prisoner pen-pal relationship

AARON ST. GERMAIN
Brook Correction Facility
Muskegon Heights, Mich.

Editor’s note: The author isn’t from Washtenaw County, but learned about

Groundcover from a fellow prison inmate. So, meet our new prison pen pal, Aaron St. Germain.

When you think of an inmate, what comes to mind: Violent?

Uneducated? Sociopathic? What if I told you most inmates aren’t like that? What if I told you most inmates are caring, intelligent, empathic people? Would you believe me? Of course not.

Do you know what is felt by all inmates, both good and bad? Loneliness. Inmates (myself included) feel so shut off from the world. There are almost 40,000 inmates in Michigan alone! Three barbed wire ➡

➡ fences is all it takes to be secluded from society. Families of inmates are often poor and can't afford a phone call, let alone money on our books for commissary. I don't know the exact numbers, but a lot of people live off an \$11 loan from the State of Michigan for indigent status. And \$5 to be used for postage (10 first-class, 1 oz. letters), but for a lot of inmates there is no one to write. And oftentimes, no one who cares enough to write.

Don't get me wrong, some of these inmates are users and will use any and everybody they can. There are websites full of inmates, though, who are genuinely looking for pen pals or romance who truly want a friend. Others just want you to send them money and do everything else for them. And that's not okay!!!!

Here is a list of things that are a sign you are being used:

- They demand money, never asking.
- They ask you to send money to someone else's account.
- They ask you to Western Union someone money in the world.
- In every letter or phone call, they are asking for some kind of favor.
- They tell you they need money to pay off debts (this means they are either doing drugs or gambling) and both of these are major misconducts in the prison system.

• And most importantly, they never, ever say thank you.

When writing an inmate, knowing when and how to say "no" is very important. Here are some other tips for writing an inmate:

1. Set boundaries. Make your intentions on writing this person crystal clear, such as, what you are looking for — pen pal, friend, romance, etc.

2. If you have any hesitation about doing anything, follow your gut and say "no."

3. Let them know what you are willing and not willing to do for them.

4. If they ask you if you have any friends for their friends, it's a plot to try to write your friend because they are using you.

Writing an inmate can be beneficial to both you and the inmate. You are giving him or her support they may not otherwise have, and you gain an understanding of who they are, and that, because we committed a crime doesn't mean we are a bad person; it means we made a mistake.

There are plenty of websites for prisoner pen pals. All you have to google is "prison pen pals" and go from there. Remember, prison is lonely, and a friend could make a real difference. So make a new friend today in the place you would least expect it! ●



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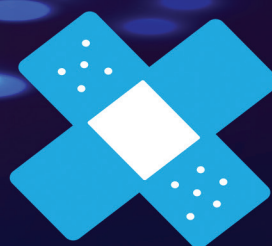


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Many jobs, few homes

Ann Arbor is a victim of its own success. Thousands want to live here, but few homes have been built in recent years. The result: exploding prices for homebuyers and renters.

What if Ann Arbor took the housing crisis seriously?

That was my thought when real-estate developer Peter Allen spoke up in an April 23 meeting organized by the Washtenaw Democratic Party and advocated passionately for redeveloping publicly owned parking lots as housing. That sounds like a cool idea. Why aren't we doing that? I thought.

It turns out the city's already exploring that idea, but the going is slow. Real estate development is not a game for the impatient, and when you throw efforts to make housing affordable into the mix — hoo, boy.

"Our town and gown is out of balance," Allen told me July 15 as he drove me to look at sites he favored for redevelopment. The University of Michigan has burgeoned in recent years, bringing in more and more students and employing more and more people on campus and in its hospital. But the city's housing stock has not kept up.



JIM McBEE
Managing editor

And it's especially hurting the working and middle classes, who find themselves paying more than they should to live near work, or spending too much on a long commute, he said.



Right now, we're creating housing for 10% of the jobs.

Peter Allen
Real estate developer
and U-M instructor

For people making \$20,000 to \$80,000 a year, "you ought to be able to walk to work."

Allen has a long list of sites in mind for redevelopment, often parking lots. He assigns them to his grad students to develop proposals and grades them. But he wants to take these ideas out of the classroom and into towers of concrete and steel. His top targets: The Y-lot downtown, between the library and the Fourth and William Parking Garage. The Ann and Main lot, right across from the County Courthouse. An empty lot next to Huron High

See **HOUSING** page 11 ➔



I don't think you can build enough housing to meet the demand.

Jennifer Hall
Executive director, Ann Arbor Housing Commission



The Y-Lot

The most talked-about city property since the Library Lot. Smith Group is currently analyzing this site, meeting with stakeholders to develop a consensus on the shape, height and uses it might be put to. They'll make an initial report to City Council in November. Peter Allen's students have done similar work in class. Here's some of what they envision were the city to agree to redevelop this parking lot:

Lower underground: 3 levels of parking

Upper underground: Grocery store comparable to Plum Market or Whole Food accessed by escalator

First floor: retail and coffee shop
Above: 15-27 stories of homes; 241 "workforce housing," 100 active senior, unspecified market rate.

Overall cost of project: \$115 million to \$254 million

Who would benefit from workforce housing in A2?

JIM McBEE
Managing editor

Matt Newhouse has that Detroit hustle. He talks fast. You sense the rhythm of his sales patter even when he's not selling. He keeps an eye on the money. He's worked his way up from a brief bout of homelessness — "if you're homeless once, you get a taste for the house life" — to owning a restaurant consultancy. He drives for Uber and Lyft three days a week. And he's been chasing a better deal since he moved to Ann Arbor from Detroit.

He's worked at New York Pizza Depot, then Insomnia Cookie, then food delivery startup Zoomer. "I kept trying to catch up," he said, but the Ann Arbor level of prosperity eluded him.

"The American dream for rich people is a straight line," Newhouse said. "The American dream for poor people is a zigzag."



The American dream for rich people is a straight line. The American dream for poor people is a zigzag.

Matt Newhouse

In 2011, Newhouse rented an Ann Arbor room for \$350 a month. He met his future husband and they moved

into what is now Manchester West apartments — off Liberty Street near Stadium Boulevard — in 2012, splitting \$900 rent with a friend. Then a new owner bought the complex, he said, and raised the rent to \$1,200 "with no upgrades."

They moved to Arbor Landings and a two-bedroom apartment in the northwest corner of town. Between 2013 and 2017, the rent rose from \$1,200 a month to \$1,900. "When we left, we were at \$1,600," Newhouse said. What's more, the energy bills in the summer were \$450 a month "just because of air conditioning," and \$250-300 in the winter. He and his husband had to find a better deal.

"In 2018, we moved out to Ypsilanti," he said, in Ridgewood Apartments off Carpenter Road. The rent was lower, and so were the heating and cooling bills. Then, another change.

Newhouse's husband, a professional

cellist, decided to pursue his doctor of musical arts at Bowling Green State University. He's taken a pay cut while he finishes his studies, Newhouse said, but can expect to do a lot better when he's the one training doctoral students.

Meanwhile, the couple had a choice to make: Who was going to make the commute? The decision wasn't easy. "I'm a Michigan boy through and through," Newhouse said.

"We ran the numbers," he said. "We ran it and ran it and ran it."

Bowling Green's low cost of living won the day, Newhouse said: \$675 is what we pay down there. ... Our insurance went down about \$100 a month, too." He bought a Prius to shave the expense of driving two hours up and down U.S. 23 and I-75 every workday.

The plan is to move back to Michigan when his husband finishes his studies. "We want to move back to the area. We want to have kids." ●



SPECIAL REPORT: Rethinking the Ann Arbor housing crisis

• **Concentrate** takes a closer look at the ideas formed in Peter Allen's classroom and how Allen proposes they turn into reality. See it Sept. 11 on concentratemedia.com.

How do you define affordable housing?

When it comes to what housing you can afford, there are two rules of thumb: Housing should cost no more than 30% of your income, or the combination of housing and commuting to a job should cost no more than about 50%.

With the 30% rule in mind, the National Low Income Housing Coalition looks at what wage is required to afford a one- or two-bedroom abode in its annual report, "Out of Reach." In my ZIP code, 48108, that pencils out to \$20.19 an hour (on average) for a two-bedroom place. If you're making under 20 bucks an hour, you'd better find a roommate if you want to live in my neighborhood. If you're making Michigan's minimum wage of \$9.45 an hour, well — good luck.

There are places where you can live more cheaply, but they're not that close to Ann Arbor's job centers — like the U-M campus and hospital. Let's say you found an affordable place on the far side of Romulus, in the 48242 ZIP code. On average, you can afford the same size place on a \$17.69 hourly wage, but you've got to spend extra money and time to get to your gig.

Obviously, this generalizes a complex situation. Some folks need only one bedroom; larger families need more. Households frequently combine incomes. The bottom line: It's expensive to live in Ann Arbor, and not all jobs pay enough to do so.

Peter Allen, the developer who's pushing public entities to develop their own land into housing, is interested in serving folks who make \$20,000 to \$80,000 a year. For a full-time job, that means making between \$10 and \$40 an hour. Even someone making four times the minimum wage can find it difficult to locate housing close to work in Ann Arbor. "People who work in these areas should be able to live in these areas," he said.

Learn more: In 2018, Ben Connor Barrie wrote a guide to housing-affordability terms for our partner in this project, Concentrate: secondwavemedia.com/concentrate/features/affordabilityabcs0446.aspx. ●

MEET YOUR VENDOR

**Pony Bush, vendor no. 305****In one sentence, who are you?**

I'm just me. Just an average guy. ... I'm a vendor of Groundcover News.

Where do you normally sell Groundcover?

Village Kitchen and First Baptist Church.

When and why did you start selling Groundcover?

Cos I wanted to make money.

What are your favorite things about selling Groundcover?

Making money and meeting people.

What's something our readers should know?

That we're putting this paper out for ... people that's struggling, that it's a positive thing. ... It's a paper for anybody.

What's the most interesting thing that's ever happened to you while selling Groundcover?

Meeting different personalities. I've met friends through selling Groundcover News.

How would you like to see Ann Arbor change for the better?

We don't have no black-owned businesses downtown. It would make it better to get some housing downtown for lower income people. We need affordable restaurants, too. ●

Boober Tours is booming

KEVIN SPANGLER

Groundcover vendor No. 307

Exciting things are happening with Boober.

Over the last year I have invested every cent into Boober to grow and expand the business. I have created three advertising trailers to create a new source of income to pay for the upcoming, best-reality-changing app the world has ever seen. I recently have completed selling all of the advertising spots on the community advertising trailer: Kolossos Printing, Sonic Lunch, Bright Lights Social Media, Ann Arbor District Library, Kerrytown Farmers Market, Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority, the William Street Bikeway, Residence Marriot and Groundcover News.

I have been working tirelessly to find large advertisers around the state of Michigan, drafting and rewriting to connect myself to the people who are going to make this happen. Recently I was contacted by 10k Advertising, a national branding company out of Los Angeles that heard my story on how I turned my life around, helped others and created an outdoor mobile-advertising transportation service. A 10k representative who represents Kushy Punch purchased a whole pedicab and trailer. We are now talking about expanding to other cities.

By the time you read this article, I and my partner, Ariel, will have finished writing our first book, "Rising out of Depression and Going up the Royal Road." It is a book that teaches how to set goals, how to forgive — and that it is a continual daily practice — and a 300-year goal plan for humanity so that, together, we as a world community can *envision* the positive future for generations to come.

Below is an excerpt of the book.

Neighborhood of the Goal List

We forgive ourselves by sending loving positive energy toward ourselves for things we have done in the past, while also taking responsibility for our wrongdoings through use of our awareness. We enter the present and change our current behavior. Entering

the city of goals helps us move forward because it gives us a new direction of our choosing: who we want to be going forward. If we were to hold resentment toward ourselves, we would be living in a negative mind state. If I'm living in a negative mind state, I create a negative reality. When I find myself in a negative mind state, I learned I need to break mental patterns. We can enter the city of goals within us by reading our goal list, which fills up our mindset with what we need to fill up to work on to move forward. If I'm in a negative mind state, I'm just focusing on the problem, and when I focus on the problem, I get more problems. I take myself out of rumination by looking ahead.

Our goal list should be as detailed as possible, but start with one goal: your biggest dream. Even if we don't think it's possible, write it down. Everything is possible. We just need a plan. Shoot for the highest goal. By working toward the highest goal, you can always reset your goals because you open so many other doors on the road. Sometimes what you accomplish is not what you expected to, but it opens up new doors, doors you would have never been able to open if you never set a goal.

If you tell someone a goal you have and they react in a way that shows they don't believe it, don't worry because it is just their negativity. They are hindered by their own roadblocks, which keep them in a reality that they have designed, and they are not yet working to expand themselves beyond their perceived limitations. It's just a program; people develop all types of programs that they live by that keep them inside of a systematic structure that is familiar, so they don't change and neither does the greater societal whole. Don't take it personally. Send them positive loving energy.

What is the worst thing that could happen if you set an impossible goal while inside the city of goals? Nothing. You just keep moving forward toward it and practicing what you need to know how to do in order to achieve it, and you either achieve it or you don't but either way you are moving forward on your royal road. ●

Vendor Cindy's art on display throughout town

**CINDY GERE**

Groundcover Vendor No. 279

Art around Ann Arbor from the homeless and low-income community has popped up in recent months around the city. Many are showing their talents. New shows are coming up and people are becoming more inspired to express their artistic talents.

As many of you know, I am one of the artists and my name is Cindy Gere, also known as Kung Fu Panda. My work is in three locations.

First is the Delonis Center, up on the walls in the lobby. That is strictly just a showing of my work ... it gives you an idea of what I love to do. In the main dining hall there are many other art works of mine on display.

My second location is in the art gallery for low-income individuals at the Journey of Faith Church off Washtenaw Avenue near the Trader Joe's. The gallery is in the basement and is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday

through Saturday.

The last location, starting on Sept. 1, is in the Mercy House at 805 W. Huron St. This show on the walls will be of smaller pieces.

For all who love the artist Keith Haring, my work is similar to his. I've been trying to be an artist — it's hard in this economy. For us artists we truly struggle. So, come and see all the art around Ann Arbor. All my art will be up through the end of this year. ●

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To be able to do something great in your life, you're gonna have to realize your failures. You're gonna have to embrace them and figure out how to overcome it.

DAVE CHAPPELLE
comedian

My, My! Peter A. Collins

ACROSS

- 1. It might wind up in your yard?
- 5. Unexpected outbursts
- 11. "___ girl!"
- 15. Highway sign
- 16. Passionate
- 17. Close at hand
- 18. * "Sing Along" bandleader
- 20. Email alternative
- 21. Montana neighbor
- 22. *Super short skirts
- 24. Weekly TV program
- 26. Child's injury
- 27. Tiny amt. of time
- 29. Father of Geometry
- 33. Like fine art, maybe
- 36. Cafe order
- 40. Zoo favorite
- 41. Wanders in an airport?
- 42. State (whose postal code is the first two letters of the answers to the starred clues)
- 44. Bon ___
- 45. Maestro's concern
- 47. They may come with strings attached
- 48. Some kids
- 49. Fussies at a mirror
- 51. Popcorn topping
- 53. Changes indentations
- 57. Kind of party
- 61. * Small but powerful thing
- 65. Massachusetts town
- 66. Tolstoy's "___ Karenina"
- 67. * Fashionable shopping area
- 69. ___ shot
- 70. Provoke

DOWN

- 1. Some high-performance auto engines, for short
- 2. Rust, chemically
- 3. Indian instrument
- 4. Engraved work of art
- 5. Recruiting-poster Uncle
- 6. Proper partner?
- 7. Go off-script
- 8. Communications business, shortly
- 9. "Ano" beginning
- 10. Blinking light
- 11. Ohio college named for a biblical city
- 12. Prom-goer, usually
- 13. Uber alternative
- 14. Cultural activities
- 19. Weeding implements
- 23. Lament
- 25. Truck stop sight
- 28. Tilt, as the head
- 30. Long ride?
- 31. Informed about
- 32. Mississippi has four
- 33. Internet address opener
- 34. With 35-Down, log-in requirement
- 35. See 34-Down
- 37. Greek letter X
- 38. Web search result
- 39. Things bouncers check
- 42. "Waterlilies" painter
- 43. "Immediately!"
- 46. Noncommittal response
- 48. Orange Place on a Monopoly board
- 50. Block
- 52. Cut with light
- 54. Make ___ (get rich)
- 55. Canoe wood source
- 56. Paint alternative
- 58. Active
- 59. Brouhaha
- 60. Change
- 61. Hockey goalie's need
- 62. Attending a Dodgers game, say
- 63. Little pest
- 64. "Outer" prefix
- 68. "___ Miserables"

Peter A. Collins

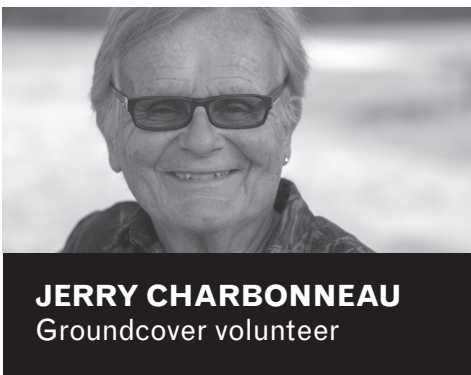
Being helped doesn't always mean feeling helped

Use any search engine to find the term "affordable housing" and you will find a wealth of information but not much about changing the root causes of the problem. I found that it is not just Ann Arbor that has the problem, but it is a state, national and global problem.

Last week I engaged with residents of three community centers in town — Green-Baxter, Hikone and Bryant — to explore residents' thoughts and feelings around the effect of affordable housing on their lives.

Here is some of what the residents told me about their experiences of living in affordable housing. The interviews took place at the centers.

In summary, all the residents told



stories of disrespect by the management companies of each community. In fact, the main themes were feelings of disrespect, neglect and being stuck in their current living space.

One resident expressed strong feelings about "not getting any help." She

mentioned that every time her income increased, she was immediately confronted with increased rental fees, leaving her frustrated, angry and trapped in her situation. In spite of her efforts to change that, she remains stuck. Another resident related a story of needing help with maintenance but not getting any — indeed, not even getting a call back. The residents spoke of very helpful management historically, but recently that has changed. It seemed to them that current management is just in it for the money. Other issues expressed by residents included being overcharged by management, and community services slowing down or being discontinued.

So, you might say, "What is Ann Arbor doing about the lack of affordable housing, and just how much of a problem is it in our city?" A few city leaders, council members and community organizations do call the lack of affordable housing a crisis. I will explore this aspect in the months ahead and will share in future editions.

Meanwhile, I invite you to explore this list of 50 big ideas around affordable housing being considered in communities across the country: bisnow.com/index.php/national/news/affordable-housing/tk-ideas-policies-proposals-suggestions-to-overcome-the-affordable-housing-crisis-100263. ●

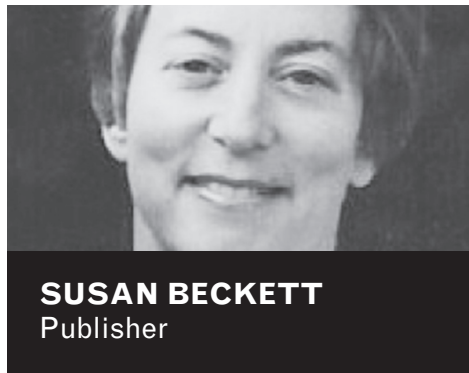
Student pantry supports inclusiveness, success

A valid U-M ID and filling out a confidential questionnaire are all it takes to use the Maize and Blue Cupboard, the University of Michigan food pantry started by business school majors in 2014. It became an official U-M program with a dedicated space and expanded hours in April 2019. Michael Brandon and Mai-ly Tran are two of the students now paid to greet people and orient newcomers to the pantry.

With the pantry set up like a grocery store, little orientation is actually required. Brandon and Tran show shoppers the back room, which has personal care items and cookware. They are informed that there is a recommended number of items to take in each food category and then invited to take what they prefer from the coolers and shelves. The only items that need to be disclosed upon departure are cookware and that is just so their somewhat limited inventory of those items can be monitored.

Brandon is a senior work-study neuroscience student who experienced the need firsthand. "Last year I didn't do so well and ended up on academic probation, and being food insecure was part of what led to that downfall," he said. With the resources and education he has received at the Cupboard, "those bad eating habits, bad food habits, have washed away."

As 30 percent of U-M students



SUSAN BECKETT
Publisher

struggle at least occasionally with food insecurity, the need for food assistance was one that the students were keenly aware of. Students in the business school consulting on student food insecurity started the Cupboard as a monthly, volunteer-operated distribution. The need became even more acute in 2018 with the advent of the Go Blue Guarantee Scholarships that provide free tuition for any in-state U-M student whose family income is below \$65,000. (Admissions are need-blind.) When the Maize and Blue Cupboard had a soft opening at its permanent location in the basement of the Betsy Barbour residence hall in April, 50 students a day came for groceries.

A study done by Nikki Kasper while she was a doctoral student at U-M and published in 2016 confirms that Brandon's experience was not unique. Responses to a survey she sent out included:

• "Aside from not being able to afford food, sometimes I find that to keep up with the rigorous academic demands and meet assignments, I must skip several meals in a day."

• "I have gone two days without eating because I didn't have food in my fridge."

• Food insecurity in college means "Hungry, frustrated, and unable to concentrate while studying or in class."

Kasper found that food insecurity correlated with a lower grade point average. Study after study has linked poor nutrition and lack of food access to lower GPAs, higher incidence of health problems and often long-term academic hiatus.

In prior years, Brandon worked as a receptionist and doing food preparation. He chose working at the pantry last March to "gain a sense of what it means to work with people in terms other than money ... learning how to respect people ... to help them understand that this is a shared space and I can't take everything."

Brandon works with a variety of people, including student volunteers who unload the delivery trucks on Monday and stock the shelves for the Tuesday crowds that seek fresh produce and staples. Most of the food comes from Food Gatherers (some of which has been recovered from U-M's

dining rooms by the student-run Food Recovery Network) and gardens at the Ginsberg Center and East Quad in collaboration with the Campus Farm. They occasionally get other donations, such as a load of candy left over from a blood drive that M-Dining gave to the pantry.

Personal experience makes Brandon a good fit for the job.

"There was a period of time when I went to a soup kitchen with my great-aunt and we could grab a few things to take home with us. That experience helped me understand that there is a cost for everything and to be mindful of how what we do affects the people who bring things to us," he said.

The mission of Maize and Blue Cupboard is to ensure members of the U-M community, whether on a tight budget or physically constrained from getting to a grocery store, receive equitable access to healthy, nutritious and nourishing food, and the ability to prepare it for themselves or others.

Students apply their specialized learning to helping pantry clients to meet their unique nutritional needs and learn how to prepare healthy meals. Sophia Lui, a senior in the Business School who has been helping with the pantry since 2016, is excited about using her skills to help promote cooking classes that will start once the



Mai-ly Tran and Michael Brandon orient newcomers to the Maize and Blue Cupboard, a food pantry for U-M students, faculty and staff. | Photo by Susan Beckett

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SEPTEMBER 2019 EVENTS AT BETHLEHEM

- September 5 Youth Group Kick-Off potluck
- September 5, 19 Bethlehem Prayer Circle, 11:30-12:15
- September 7, 28 Football parking in the church lot
- September 8 Sunday School Kick-Off and Blessing of the Backpacks
- September 12 All Church Game Night, 6:30-8:30
- September 21 German Pretzel Sales, 11-1, \$1 or \$10 dozen

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October 4 is our Oktoberfest dinner at 6:00. Call 665-6149 for info & tickets



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- 10:00 a.m. Sanctuary
- 10:15 a.m. Sunday school
- Coffee Connection follows each service

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➔ HOUSING from page 6

School. The top level of the Liberty Square Parking Structure on Washington Street, which was built to support up to four more levels.

Allen believes if public entities provide the land and private developers can sell most of the housing at market rate, a fifth of the housing developed can be subsidized and affordable: say, \$500 a month for a one-bedroom apartment.

Jennifer Hall is not so sure it pencils out that conveniently.

Hall, the executive director of the Ann Arbor Housing Commission, is also looking at publicly owned land that could be developed into housing. On April 1, the City Council directed City Administrator Howard Lazarus to work with Hall to study the feasibility of several city-owned properties as sites for affordable housing.

“Peter Allen probably got the idea from me because we’ve been talking about it for so long.”

All the plans she’s worked on rely on state and federal money to subsidize housing. That’s the only way she’s seen the math work, she said.

“Maybe we can have a pilot project that doesn’t have state or federal funding.”

One of the downsides to government funding is how much it slows the process. “People get mad at developers, but development is complicated,” Hall said. “When you add affordable housing to it, it gets twice as complicated.”

As an example, a lot on Platt Road near where I live — which already was the site for affordable housing — was approved by City Council in 2014 to replace the aging buildings there with new apartments that would house more people. In 2019, crews finally demolished the buildings and graded the property but, as I write, they have yet to pour the first foundation.

An oft-cited 2015 report sponsored by the Washtenaw County Office of Economic Development estimated that Ann Arbor needed to create 140 new units of affordable housing every year until 2035. “Since then Ann Arbor has created 50 new units at most,” said Crain’s Detroit Business in a June 23 article.

“I don’t think you can build enough housing to meet the demand,” said Hall. The Ann Arbor Housing Commission provides housing and related services for low-income people in the city. In November, about 4,300 people applied for 600 spots on the Ann Arbor Housing Commission’s housing-choice voucher waitlist.

Allen wants to speed up the process. He cites what he calls “buckets of risk” — all the things that can go wrong when trying to develop a property. Will the economy slip into a recession during construction? Will the units sell as expected? Is the soil contaminated? Allen says the toughest risks to deal with locally are community goals — what residents want to see happen — and political approvals — getting the project through zoning, planning and the City Council. “Ann Arbor’s so difficult to build,” he said. ●

➔ onsite kitchen is complete. She and other club members already recruit and coordinate volunteers to help with unloading on Mondays and with the distribution garden at the Ginsberg Center. Lui also shops at the Cupboard, grateful for the high-quality produce.

“When I arrived on campus, I didn’t expect how expensive everything was. I didn’t expect food to be so hard to get,” said Lui. “I like being able to talk with people about their experiences at the pantry, share recipes, find out what they’ve done with new items, and help them become volunteers to help out and pay it back, too.”

Tran found a posting for work at the Cupboard on the student job list and started in May. She has since referred several friends to the Cupboard and gets feedback from them on how things could be improved. For example, several mentioned that more dairy, especially eggs, would be very helpful, and the staff is now trying to fully address that need.

Bringing art to the pantry walls is a project she looks forward to this fall. “It is so great to give people what they need,” said Tran.

The pantry is in the basement of the Betsy Barbour Residence Hall, 420 S. State Street, accessed through the Maynard Street entrance only. The official grand opening will occur this fall when the demonstration kitchen is ready. The fall hours of operation are 3-7 p.m. Tuesday-Friday and 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday. ●

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

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10 for \$10

Exploring Washtenaw County on the cheap

Elizabeth Bauman
Groundcover contributor

Looking for something to do that won’t break the bank? Hoping to try something new? Wanting a little something sweet or savory? 10 for \$10 is here to provide you with low-cost or free things to do in Washtenaw County.

- 1 Get fit at County Farm Park in Ann Arbor. The 1.4-mile fitness trail has 18 stations. 2230 Platt Road, Ann Arbor.
- 2 Stop by Pizza Bob’s for a “Sister Hazel,” a delicious vegetarian sub. 814 S. State Street, Ann Arbor.
- 3 Take the kids to Timber Town Park in Chelsea for hours of fun. Located just north of town on Sibley Road.
- 4 Spend the afternoon strolling through Dexter. Be sure to pop into The Painted Trout fishing store. You may start a new hobby. 8063 Main St., Dexter.
- 5 Take an evening walk through the Law Quadrangle on the U-M campus — considered one of the top architectural highlights in Michigan. Marvel at the stone structure, archways and lush green lawns. The law school and quadrangle are bounded by S. State Street, S. University Avenue, Tappan Avenue and Monroe Street in Ann Arbor.

- 6 Visit the Ann Arbor Library and check out the Up For Grabs section. You can get some of the most popular, newly released books and other materials for two weeks (one week for audio-visual items).
- 7 Take a tour of the famed fairy doors of Ann Arbor. Access a current map of these marvelous miniature mansions at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fairy_Doors_of_Ann_Arbor.
- 8 Visit one of the local apple orchards for delicious Michigan apples.
- 9 Take a walk along the Huron River at Gallup Park early in the morning.
- 10 Take a drive down one of the Natural Beauty roads in Washtenaw County. Mahrle Road in Manchester is especially beautiful!

Want to contribute to 10 for \$10? Send ideas for inexpensive experiences and treasures in and around our community to submissions@groundcovernews.com.

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